

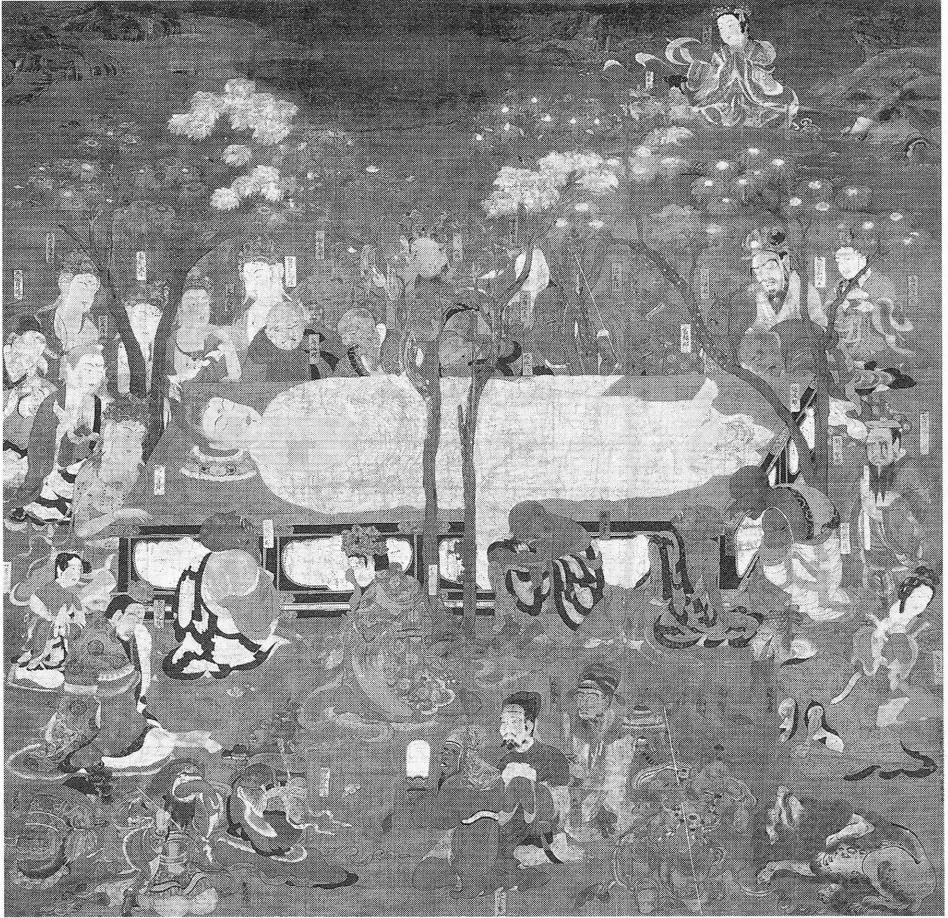
CHAPTER 10

THE TEARS OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: LOYOLA, SHAN-TAO, SHINRAN

1. Tears: The Sorrow of Despair and the Bliss of Grace

Among the Buddhist paintings preserved at Kongōbuji 金剛峰寺 temple on Mt. Kōya 高野 is a depiction of the Buddha's Parinirvana, or entrance into nirvana at death. In the lower right corner it bears the date of completion, Ōtoku 3 [1086], fourth month, which corresponds to the beginning of the "cloister government" (*insei* 院政) of Retired Emperor Shirakawa-in 白河院. The following year, in Ōshū 奥州, the far northeastern province, Minamoto Yoshiie 源義家 executed Kiyohara Iehira 清原家衡 and Takehira 武衡, thus suppressing the Gosannen 後三年 Uprising (Later Three Years' War).

The large Parinirvana painting, in color on silk, measures 266 cm. in height and 270 cm. in width. In the center, the full length of the body of Śākyamuni lies peacefully, with eyes quietly closed under gently rounded eyelids. Between his brows the Buddha's white hair (*byakugō* 白豪) is vividly depicted. Surrounding the figure of Śākyamuni in repose are his chief disciples, and bodhisattvas Monju 文殊 and Kannon 觀音 are in attendance. Kneeling somewhat apart are heavenly beings and ministers, and as if to represent the animal kingdom, a lion is present with its back to the viewer. In the upper right corner, the Buddha's mother, Queen Māyā 摩耶, is shown descending from Tōri 忉利 heaven above Mt. Sumeru with a train of children, her slightly opened eyes gazing downward and across to Śākyamuni. The brilliance of coloration



The Buddha's Parinirvana. Collection of Kongōbuji, Mt. Kōya.

and boldness of composition make this work—the earliest Japanese Parinirvana painting—a recognized masterpiece of Japanese Buddhist art.

Since the painting depicts the death of Śākyamuni, it is natural that all the persons gathered around him are shown deeply grieving. Even the lion raises its eyes to heaven, convulsed with sorrow. Among these figures, however, the expressions of sorrow of the arhat disciples of the Buddha are especially poignant. Each in his own way is contorted with grief, expressed in face and arms, but without exception their eyes are tightly shut. In contrast with the other figures in the painting, whose expressions of sorrow are drawn with partially or fully open eyes, the arhats' grief is shown with closed eyes. It may be said that their closed eyes convey the depth of their despair, with which their very tears have been exhausted. It suggests the violence of lamentation that comes after even the flow of tears in wailing has ceased. At that point, their eyes have already sunk into the surrounding darkness. As mentioned above, the eyes of Śākyamuni Buddha in the center of the painting are also closed, but they bespeak the tranquility of having entered eternal meditation. Śākyamuni's peaceful stillness stands in contrast to the depth of sorrow of the arhats, imparting a profundity to the painting. The closed eyes depicted in this Parinirvana scene suggest two completely different worlds.

If we seek in Christian art a genre that corresponds to the Parinirvana scene, it is surely the *Pieta*, depictions of the grieving sacred mother of Christ holding the body of her crucified son. Some depictions include Mary alone, others include other saints and cherubs. It is surprising to see, in Renaissance statues of the *Pieta*, the closed eyes of Christ, who has died in agony, together with the fully opened eyes of Mary and the others. When compared with the Parinirvana scene described above, the *Pieta* leaves a strong impression. The *Pieta* theme has been sculpted in marble and bronze and frequently painted on canvass and wooden panels; its characteristic composition has been a favored motif, together with the lowering of Christ from the cross and his burial. In all of these scenes, the gaze of Mary and the other saints on

the crucified Son of God is passionate and filled with an intense light.

Let us consider several examples. In the *Pieta* of Giovanni Bernini (1430-1516), Mary seems nearly to kiss the right side of Christ's face as she looks intently into his quietly closed eyes. In the painted panel by the Venetian school artist Carlo Crivelli (c.1430-1495), produced in 1485, Mary, from below, approaches close to the face of Christ tilted downward and seems almost to scrutinize his eyes. Tears appear in the eyes of Mary and the other saints, flowing from their open eyes onto their cheeks. The *Pieta* of Crivelli in the Sant' Emidio cathedral (1473) and the *Avignon Pieta* by an unknown hand from the mid-fifteenth century are quite similar. In the former, the nose of Christ and that of Mary are nearly touching, and a large tear has formed in Mary's right eye; in the latter, tears flow from the open eyes of Mary Magdalen, who stands at the Virgin Mary's side.

These characteristics may be seen in most *Pietas* of the Renaissance period. In Botticelli's panel, *Pieta and Saints* (ca.1490-1500), however, we find a different quality. There, Mary, who leans toward the naked body of Christ in her lap, throws her head back and raises her face, and her eyes, sunken in profound despair, are closed. In the lower right side of the painting, a woman is placed near the head of Christ, and at the lower left another woman kneels and embraces his legs. These two women also quietly close their eyes. There are no tears flowing from the eyes of Mary or the two women. The three together form a triangular composition surrounding Christ, and this space evokes the shadowed world of sorrow that visits after tears have run dry.

Botticelli, who lyrically depicted the power of life in *The Birth of Venus*, in *Pieta and Saints*, took up the theme of the desolation of the spirit and gave birth to a space of profound sadness. Perhaps it was Michelangelo, however, who achieved the highest bounds of this genre in his *Pieta* (ca.1498-99). Executed about the same time as Botticelli's *Pieta*, Michelangelo's 175 cm. marble statue is enshrined in San Pietro cathedral in Rome. Mary's head bends down as she embraces Christ on her lap, and as though peering into the bottomless darkness within her heart, has closed her eyes. The Son of God and the Virgin Mary are

together in their isolation. The upward turned eyes of Christ are closed, but one senses a subtle resonance with the downward turned eyes of Mary, which are also closed. Michelangelo's *Pieta* quite naturally brings to mind the Parinirvana scene painted in Japan four hundred years before. In seeking to delineate the locus of profound sorrow, these two works of religious art strike a surprisingly similar chord.

Tears are commonly associated with feelings of sorrow, but in the lamentation that occurs after passing through the depths of despair, tears may be exhausted, and we may be drawn into a world bereft of sight. At that time, the actual world ceases to be the object of the functioning of our sight and turns into a world of images that are like coruscation born from within darkness. Our eyes, quietly and firmly closed, draw themselves into a fear of blindness, and one seems to resolve to live in a state of sightlessness. Tears are a life-sign born in the process in which the world of sight shifts into a world of darkness or blindness, and simultaneously, they are sacred traces that mediate the transformation from the sorrow of despair to blissful grace.

2. The Tears of Loyola and Xavier

On 20 January 1548, Francisco de Xavier wrote a letter from Cochin, then a Portuguese colony on the west coast of south India, to Jesuits in Rome. More than half a century had passed since Michelangelo had carved his *Pieta* for the cathedral of San Pietro. In this letter, Xavier records the first reports he had received concerning Japan and describes his interview with the Japanese "Anhero" (Yajirō 弥次郎). Spurred to journey by this experience, Xavier reached Kagoshima 鹿児島 the following year, in 1549.

At the time, Xavier was conducting vigorous missionary activity, going back and forth between India and the Mallaca and Molucca islands. He happened to go to Moru island, one of the Molucca islands, where shortly before, a priest had been murdered. Xavier reports in his letter:

The hardship and danger that we undergo for the sake of love and service to our Lord God is all a rich treasure of great spiritual consolation. The tears of gratitude for this solace from God flow without interruption. Hence, this island is such that it would be altogether fitting for anyone, over a number of years, to lose the power of sight and go blind.¹

Even from this brief passage we sense Xavier's courage and devotion, but I wish to note in particular his statement that the tears of gratitude for God's solace will, over the space of years, cause the loss of sight, and further, will bring him to blindness. This is surely not a passing emotion.

The impetus for Xavier's entrance into the Society of Jesus was his encounter with Ignatius de Loyola. The two met as roommates in the same lodging at the Sorbonne, and gradually Xavier came under Loyola's influence, taking guidance from him in spiritual contemplation. At this time, Xavier probably learned from Loyola that, in the deepening of contemplation, the violent shedding of tears, even if it might present the danger of leading to blindness, possessed an important meaning for spiritual experience.

Loyola wrote *Spiritual Exercises*,² a book of systematic guidance based on his own contemplative experience, and also kept a somewhat fragmentary *Spiritual Diary*,³ both in Spanish. The existence of the latter was unknown even to the Jesuits until part of it was published in 1892. It was not until 1934 that a scholarly edition appeared and research on it began to develop.⁴ From this diary, we learn that Loyola himself, in his prayer and contemplation, experienced the shedding of tears, and at times a violent weeping and wailing, almost daily. The *Diary* as it exists today is based on two autograph manuscripts, one kept from 2 February to 12 March 1544, and the other from 13 March 1544 to 27 February 1545.

In recording his experience of weeping, Loyola sought to note distinctions in the force and quantity of his tears and the subtle characteristics of their flow. When he wept and prayed, he was a devoted

and passionate monk, but when he reflected on his experience, he was capable of the precision of an experimental scientist. This is because he viewed the phenomenon of weeping as a psychological function and was successful in codifying it, transforming it into a system of signs. I will investigate a number of basic patterns found in his writings below.

To begin, there is the phenomenon of weeping during the beginning, middle, and end of the mass. A careful distinction is drawn between weeping that persists throughout these three parts of the mass and weeping limited to one section. Second, expressions distinguishing the quantity of flowing tears are conspicuous: "a small amount of tears"; "tears"; "a large quantity of tears"; "a great amount of tears"; "violent tears"; "overflowing tears"; and so on. This measure of weeping is variously indicated for the beginning, middle, and end of the daily mass. Third, weeping is accompanied by psychological expressions of emotion, such as, for example, tears together with wailing, an overall feverishness, love, or an inner compulsion. Fourth, there are tears that flow largely in response to an image. These are tears that spill forth chiefly from imagining and contemplating the suffering of Jesus, and are frequently accompanied by violent wailing and writhing.

Loyola's tears, like the full tide, fill and overflow from both eyes and recur continuously. In his experience of weeping, however, a change gradually occurs. In the *Diary* entry for 4 March 1544, he records that, while weeping and lamenting during the mass, he experienced a violent pain in one eye, and was seized by uncertainty:

The thought occurred to me that, were I to continue intoning the mass in this way, I might lose my sight. I wondered whether it were not best to take care for both my eyes.⁵

After recording these feelings of anxiety, he writes that the weeping gradually ceased. After a short time, however, tears again overflowed from both eyes, and he was drawn again into lamentation. The convulsions of tears are mixed with the fear of going blind, but the experience of pain in the eyes makes little appearance in the remainder

of the *Diary*. Nevertheless, once the sharp pain in the eye had occurred, it could not be extracted, but was deeply implanted within his body. This experience engraved traces of anxiety that could not be erased from the depths of his heart.⁶

Loyola records the following reflections in an entry for 11 May of the same year, about two months after the pain had run through his eye:

The tears that visited me during mass this week were scant, but I experienced a far greater peace and contentment than when shedding tears at mass before. My tears today seemed completely different from my tears up to now. They were lax, interior, calm and quiet, without any violent movement. It is impossible to explain well, but the tears seem to have been interiorized.⁷

As a note to this entry in the French translation of *Spiritual Diary* states, this passage hints at a change in the character of Loyola's tears.⁸ From about this period, he gradually becomes aware of a difference between two distinct kinds of weeping before God. That is, from about this period, he frequently mentions his interest in an "interior compulsion" toward lamentation or "interior tears" in contrast to the usual flow of tears. Further, his psychological inclination toward "interior tears" is inseparable from his feelings of anxiety about going blind. The process by which his belief that excessive weeping would lead to a loss of sight stirred reflection on the interiority of tears may be seen in the entries of the *Diary*. For example, in an entry for 12 March, one week after recording his fear that he may be losing his sight, he confesses that, while visited by copious weeping and lamentation, he has knelt and prayed for long periods. He felt an inner satisfaction, and the sacred "visitation" lasted for one hour, but at this time he felt a sharp pain in both eyes and gradually his tears ceased.⁹

Thus, while battling his anxiety over going blind, Loyola was gradually guided toward exploring the interiority of his tears. His entry for 11 May above expresses a climactic point in these reflections.

Mysteriously, the *Diary* entries become exceedingly concise from the point of this entry on to the last date recorded (27 February 1545). Despite the conciseness, however, entries that do not mention tears are rare. Or rather, it may be said that the brief entries come to focus on ascertaining whether or not weeping occurred. Further, in addition to such expressions as “some tears,” “a usual amount of tears,” and “many tears,” gradually the notation of “no tears” increases in frequency. The brevity of the entries, in the light of this swift shift in content, seems to express the gravity of the struggle in Loyola’s heart.¹⁰

3. Loyola and the Experience of Weeping

Loyola wrote an immense number of letters, 6,813 of which survive today.¹¹ We see from this epistolary endeavor also his intense fervor as a missionary to the world. Further, we note again his concern with tears. On 22 November 1553, eight years after the final entry in the *Diary*, he wrote a letter from Rome to Nicolas Frois, a priest engaged in missionary work in Ingaruschust, Germany. The priest had written to him lamenting his lack of a “visitation of tears.” In his response, Loyola states that tears are essentially the free gift of God and are not to be sought after without deep humility. Further, they are not necessarily a requirement for those religious persons who are devoted to God and endeavoring to save souls. God recognizes the effectiveness of our lamentation, but if tears should “harm our bodies and our minds,” then they have lost their usefulness. Further, Loyola comforts the priest, saying there is no need to lament because of the absence of a visitation of tears.¹²

The assertion in this letter—that both those who know no tears and those whose tears spill over are able to serve God in the same way and devote themselves to the saving of souls—surely arose from Loyola’s own experience of the discovery of the “interiority of tears” seen above. Thus, the remark that tears which cause injury to our bodies and minds are fruitless suggests that a fear of blindness continued to threaten him. In this earnest reply to an immature practitioner, Loyola unexpectedly records his own confession.

As in the *Diary*, however, Loyola does not necessarily say that he is skeptical about the effectiveness of tears. For example, on 20 July 1548, he wrote a letter from Rome to Francois du Boljia, a Jesuit known for his implementation of severe practices and austerities. Loyola forbids him from engaging in practices that would draw blood from his body and recommends, in place of blood flowing from the body, the stream of the sacred gift of tears. Loyola states that tears are shed for one's own and others' sins; that they are shed upon seeing the miracle of Jesus Christ; that they are shed out of contemplative love of the sacral. Such tears all possess the same worth as those arising from noble self-reflection and thought. Here, rather than a mystical experience attained through bloody austerities, Loyola gives far greater weight to the experience of repentance, meditation, and love in tears.

In a letter dated 26 March 1553, Loyola, quoting the words of Saint Bernard, notes "the sorrowful tears of repentance."¹³ He writes that Jesus spent his last days before the crucifixion at Golgotha with his disciples in Bethany, and the tears of repentance shed by Jesus there, together with the devotion to good acts and the peace of contemplation, nurture his own heart.

Loyola's experience of shedding tears was thus strongly stimulated by the historical events of the Bible. His self-awareness in this is seen in his *Spiritual Exercises*. This work was written to guide Catholic monks to the attainment of a condition of spiritual purity through meditation and prayer. Loyola began writing it in 1522 and thereafter made numerous additions before bringing it to completion. Thus, a version was made long before the *Spiritual Diary* was recorded, and in probing the issues raised above regarding the *Diary*, the thinking expressed in *Spiritual Exercises* is highly revealing.

Spiritual Exercises is divided into four parts, divided into the spiritual stages of the first week through the fourth week. The first week is concerned with principles and basics, the contents and methods of investigation, and contemplation regarding sin and hell. The second week concerns the incarnation of Christ, and contemplation on the nativity and life of Christ. The third week focuses on contemplation of

the Last Supper and Gethsemane. The fourth week treats methods of contemplation and prayer concerning the resurrection of Christ and the rules concerning spiritual guidance.

In *Spiritual Exercises*, Loyola speaks frequently of the importance of tears, and investigation of these references reveals that the character of tears may be considered to be of two general kinds. First, there are tears for one's own sins, frequently accompanied by painful remorse and lamentation. According to Loyola, it is obstructive first to lament one's own sins and shed painful tears, and then to engage in contemplations in which one gives rise to the joy and ecstasy of heaven or the resurrection; hence, it is preferable to focus on death and judgment.¹⁴ Borrowing the words of Saint Bernard, I will label these "tears of repentance." In the tenth section of the first week, for example, physically painful practices are performed in order to repent deeply of and weep for one's sins.¹⁵ By contrast, tears of the second kind flow when one contemplates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In *Spiritual Exercises* as a whole, this second category of tears is given relatively great importance. As noted in the first contemplation of the third week, Christ suffered as a human being and further accepted that suffering; hence, one reflects on this, grieves and sorrows, and sheds tears.¹⁶ This first contemplation in particular is constructed for the contemplation of Christ's final period and the conditions as he journeys from Bethany to Jerusalem.

It is interesting to note that when Loyola speaks of meditation and contemplation, all the five senses must be mobilized. In the fifth spiritual guidance of the first week, he states that through the five senses in contemplation, one must implant within oneself the pain of hell,¹⁷ and in the section on the fifth contemplation of the second week, he emphasizes the functioning of the five senses in the contemplation of God and the angels. Further, among the items recorded concerning the first method of prayer for the fourth week, he touches on the importance of contemplation employing the five senses.¹⁸ These passages are directed toward the contemplative practitioner's experience of the crucifixion of Christ, or toward reliving it in one's own vital existence.¹⁹ In this sense, *Spiritual Exercises* takes note of the final period of Christ's life as he

moved inexorably toward the agony of the cross and strongly recommends contemplation on this scene. The goal of the spiritual exercise of meditation and contemplation lies in the demand for one's own physical body to live the actuality of the scene of the crucifixion. The tears that one will shed at that time are to be imagined and felt as possessed of suffering and pain, nearly identical to the tears that Christ shed.

The fundamental meaning of the tears that Loyola records almost daily in his *Spiritual Diary* may be seen, in the light of *Spiritual Exercises*, to lie in being tears of repentance for one's sins, on the one hand, and at the same time, in being tears shed on transferring the agony of Christ into one's own body. This experience of tears was not a phenomenon unique to Loyola alone. His contemporary Saint Teresa (1515-1582), who founded the Carmelite nuns in Spain, speaks in her *Autobiography* of her tears of joy shed through the grace of God and her tears shed to atone for the sin of betraying God.²⁰ There are numerous other examples of similar experiences among the mystical thinkers of the Christian world. In the thoroughness of the experience of tears and in profound pursuit of their religious significance, however, Loyola is unsurpassed. His *Spiritual Exercises* and *Spiritual Diary* are indispensable resources for exploring the deep existential structure of sorrow through the bodily manifestation of tears.

4. Shan-tao and the Experience of Tears

The Pure Land Buddhist master Shan-tao 善導 (613-681) was active in China approximately nine centuries before the time of Loyola. Receiving the teaching of Tao-ch'ò 道綽, he ascertained the possibility of attaining birth into Amida Buddha's Pure Land through the practice of the nen-butsu and brought T'ang dynasty Pure Land Buddhist thought to the high point of its development. It was taught that if one entered into nen-butsu samadhi in this life, the Pure Land of Bliss would appear before one's eyes, and according to one theory, Shan-tao cast himself from a willow tree growing at the Kuang-ming 光明 temple where he dwelt, thus

achieving his long cherished wish. Later, the influence of his thought clearly manifested itself in Genshin 源信 and Hōnen 法然 in Japan, and also reached Shinran 親鸞.

Shan-tao left numerous writings, including a major commentary on the *Sutra of Contemplation of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*, one of the three central sutras of Pure Land Buddhist tradition. Among his other works is *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land* in one fascicle. This work is also known as *Hymns for the Six Hours*, for it consists of hymns and passages for use in worship and repentance before Amida and the other Buddhas, to be performed at the “six hours” into which the day was divided: sunset, early night, midnight, dawn, morning, and midday. Shan-tao assembled most of the passages for worship from the scriptural tradition, but in the final section of “midday hymns,” he himself composed “Hymns of the Sixteen Contemplations,” placing them at the conclusion of his collection. Shan-tao’s anthology has been widely used in Japan. Hōnen’s disciples Jūren 住蓮 and Anraku 安樂 set the hymns to melodies and spread their popularity among the court ladies, but this intrusion into court life became one of the causes for the suppression of the nenbutsu, and the two were beheaded.

As mentioned above, Shan-tao placed his own hymns at the close of the collection. In addition, he added a note in which he takes up “three grades of repentance.” He states that one must perform repentance based on the aspiration that one’s teachers and fellow monks, parents, guides in the path, and all sentient beings all eliminate the “three hindrances” and attain birth in the land of Amida Buddha. This was Shan-tao’s own resolve, and at the same time, it was a requirement of all practitioners of the nenbutsu. Further, Shan-tao states that this repentance is of three kinds.

There are three grades of repentance: high, middle, and low. In the high grade of repentance, blood flows from the hair pores of one’s body and issues from one’s eyes. In the middle grade of repentance, hot beads of sweat appear from the hair pores of one’s whole body, and blood issues from one’s eyes. In the low

grade of repentance, one's whole body is pervaded by heat and tears flow from one's eyes.

Although there are differences among these three levels, they are all performed only by those who have long cultivated roots of good for emancipation. But if people in this life revere the teaching, pay homage to monks, do not cherish their lives, and repent even small transgressions, this will penetrate to their heart's core, and if they repent in this way, their heavy obstructions, whether accumulated over a long or short time, will all swiftly be eradicated. People who do not do so may urgently seek [emancipation] through the twelve periods of day and night, but in the end it will be of no avail. People who do not repent should know: Although one may not be able to shed tears and blood, if one is simply pervaded by true mind, it will be the same as [the repentance] described above.²¹

The first portion of this passage on the three grades of repentance emphasizes repentance in which blood issues from the eyes, but the latter part of the passage gives greater weight to the attainment of true mind or complete sincerity. The passage as a whole thus appears self-contradictory at first glance. What is Shan-tao's intent here? This question, viewed broadly, involves the entirety of Shan-tao's Pure Land Buddhist thought; taken narrowly, it concerns the overall structure of his *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land*.

To take up the structure of *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land* first, we find in its "Preface" the statement: "There are three kinds of repentance: first, essential; second, abbreviated; third, expanded. They are explained in detail below."²² The first type of repentance, labeled "essential," is that performed in the rituals of the first of the six hours, sunset. The second repentance, "abbreviated," is performed in the worship at midnight, the third hour, and the "expanded" repentance is performed in the final midday rituals, as the "repentance of confessional exposure" (*hotsuro sange* 発露懺悔).²³ The passage on three grades of repentance—

characterized by blood, sweat, and tears respectively—appears immediately preceding the exposition of the expanded repentance in the section on midday worship. It is apparent that the three kinds of repentance—essential, abbreviated, and expanded—in the Preface to *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land* and the three grades of repentance—blood, sweat, and tears—in the concluding portion of the worship for the midday hour, while mutually illuminating, are distinct.

As the title indicates, Shan-tao's *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land* is an anthology of hymns and passages of praise and homage to Amida Buddha and the Pure Land. The fundamental nature of the practice of worship here is delineated as the spirit of repentance. This repentance may be categorized in terms of method (the three types of essential, abbreviated, and expanded) and degree of strength (symbolized by blood, sweat, and tears). The first categorization by method involves the overall structure of the *Hymns*, while the second categorization by intensity is taken up especially in connection with the expanded repentance. Thus, in progressing through the six hours, beginning with sunset, *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land* also traces stages in the progress of repentance. The climax of this development is reached in the demands of the practice of the three grades of repentance manifested in blood, sweat, and tears. It may be said that the chief melodic line of the religious music of the *Hymns* is repentance, with hints of a religious ecstasy also interwoven. At its climax, the Pure Land practitioner suddenly experiences bodily an emotional liberation, a physical catharsis, through the outpouring of blood, sweat, and tears.

We have been considering the nature of the “three types of repentance” in the overall structure of *Hymns of Birth*, but there is another important issue. It concerns the significance of Shan-tao's two categorizations of “three types of repentance” from the perspective of his Pure Land Buddhist thought. Since he teaches birth in the Pure Land through the practice of nenbutsu and says not a word about “birth through repentance,” there appears to be a basic contradiction here. He states that the practitioner of superior nature finally attains the expanded repentance of blood, sweat, and tears, while for the inferior nenbutsu

practitioner of foolishness and ignorance, the utterance of the name of Amida Buddha itself constitutes the practice of repentance. In Shan-tao, concern for the inferior person constantly underlies his thought. In the Preface to *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land*, he speaks of "repentance according to one's transgressions."²⁴ Standing just as one is, within the working of blind passions, one repents. Nenbutsu practitioners pass their daily lives "repenting in accord with their transgressions," thinking on Amida Buddha and uttering his name. This nenbutsu in itself includes penitence and remorse for their evil acts. If this is the case, Shan-tao's repentance must ultimately be an aid or support that is absorbed and sublimated into the nenbutsu. Whether expanded, abbreviated, or essential, Shan-tao's repentance is no more than a "means for urgent striving" to birth through the nenbutsu.²⁵ Even if repentance is assumed in the nenbutsu, there is no required result. It is for this reason that Shan-tao nowhere asserts a notion of "birth through repentance." Rather, at the end of the passage on the three grades of repentance quoted above, he states that even if one does not achieve the outpouring of tears or shedding of blood, a thoroughly sincere repentance possesses an equal value. What is emphasized here is not repentance itself so much as the attitude of devotion expressed as "true mind."

We have seen that the notion of the three grades of repentance manifested by blood, sweat, and tears described by Shan-tao does not necessarily hold great significance within the system of his Pure Land thought or even within the structure of *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land* itself. If this is the case, why was it necessary for him to expound the shedding of blood and of tears in the passage on expanded repentance at the conclusion of his *Hymns of Birth*? Is it merely because the three grades of repentance are an expedient for urgent striving to birth through the nenbutsu? There appear to be two possible answers to this difficult problem. First, I wonder if Shan-tao himself, in the ecstasy and joy that he experienced in the attainment of samadhi or meditative inspiration, did not frequently experience the shedding of tears, if not of blood. He was sensitive to the experience of mystical risings and fallings occurring physically within him, and he attributed intuited contents to

the physiological foundations of samadhi. Second, the methods of worship and praise of the Buddha and repentance for one's evil acts represented a strong ritual tradition in the Buddhist world of China in his day. It is possible to conjecture that Shan-tao simply inherited this tradition, although in that case, we must ask the route by which he adopted the concepts and modes of repentance we have seen above. It is impossible here to pursue this general question, but let us turn to a consideration of several matters that are directly related.

5. Worship of Buddha and Repentance of Self

The scholar Uesugi Bunshū 上杉文秀 in his research on Shan-tao and the *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land* laments that the sources of the idea of three grades of repentance manifested by the flowing of blood and tears is unclear: "Shan-tao's sources have not been determined and remain unknown. Were someone to discover them, it would be an extremely valuable find."²⁶ Thus, the sources remain a mystery down to the present. Uesugi suggests only that with regard to this question consideration should be given to Chih-i of the T'ien-t'ai school, particularly his *Rites of Repentance of the Lotus Samadhi*.²⁷

Chih-i 智顛 (538-597) was active approximately half a century before Shan-tao during the Sui dynasty. He is known for his contributions toward developing T'ien-t'ai doctrine as a systematic thought characterized by the Chinese development of Indian Buddhist tradition. Shan-tao likewise, as a nenbutsu practitioner, displayed the Chinese characteristics of Pure Land doctrine, and the influence of Chih-i is clearly apparent in the structure of his thought. There is no question, for example, that Chih-i's contemplative method (stillness and insight) gave form and direction to the conduct of Shan-tao's meditative practice (nenbutsu samadhi). It is thus probably natural to surmise that Shan-tao's conception of repentance in terms of blood, sweat, and tears bears the marks of Chih-i's notions of repentance.

Rites of repentance in which penitence for transgressions and evil acts was performed based on Buddhist scriptures were formalized in

China as “practices of repentance” and “worship and repentance” from the Southern and Northern dynasties period to the Sui and T’ang dynasties. Ritual methods for performing repentance developed, on the one hand, connected with Taoist divination and spells for avoiding disasters and inviting good fortune, and, on the other hand, fused with the methods and concepts of Confucian rites.²⁸ It was Chih-i who assembled and systematized these various streams, and the result was *Rites of Repentance of the Lotus Samadhi*, a work in one fascicle that belongs to the early period of his writings.²⁹ The method of repentance expounded in this work may be outlined as follows. The ecstatic realm of “stillness and insight” that Chih-i aimed for was to be realized through meditation based on mental concentration and thoroughgoing contemplative exercises. First, control of the conditions of one’s body and mind was assumed, and preparation of one’s environment was required. Then, worship and offerings to buddhas and bodhisattvas were to be performed, as well as praise, worship, and chanting of sutras. Next, it is taught that the five modes of penitence are to be performed. These are indicated as repentance, seeking to hear the dharma, rejoicing in others’ good acts, transference of merit, and the awakening of aspiration. The first, repentance, indicates the penitence of the six senses (the five senses and consciousness). All the senses are mobilized and activated, and repentance is performed by thoroughly purifying the subtle functioning of each sense. In this respect, the “repentance of the six senses” corresponds to the bodily, physiological foundation of the “methods of repentance” that Chih-i speaks of. Here we should note in particular the repentance of the eye which he takes up first. Concerning it, he states that originally, the fundamental nature of the eye is emptiness and tranquility, but it has come to invert the actual causation of things and to form the cause giving rise to various grave evil deeds. Hence, we must “shed tears and weep with sorrow,” and utter our repentance.³⁰ Following this passage, Chih-i seeks to give evidence for his statements by quoting a passage on the repentance of the six senses taught in the *Sutra of the Contemplation of the Practice of Fugen Bodhisattva*. This sutra, however, states only that the eye, being attached to the world of objects, is the

cause of evil acts and offenses, and it makes us slaves of desire; nothing is said of “shedding tears and weeping with sorrow.”³¹

When Chih-i expounds the repentance of the eye in teaching the repentance of the six senses, he adds the expression, “shedding tears and weeping with sorrow,” which is not found in earlier scriptures. This is surely not coincidental, for he does this not only in *Rites of Repentance of the Lotus Samadhi*, but also in the work of his later, mature period, *Great Stillness and Insight*, in which he discusses the content of the mystical experience he refers to as “samadhi.” In the opening chapter of this work, he describes four methods of practice: samadhi of constant sitting, samadhi of constant walking, samadhi of half walking and half sitting, and samadhi of neither walking nor sitting. There are the cases of concentrating on either sitting or walking, the case of combining the two, and the case of practicing freely without particular concern about the two. In connection with the third method, the samadhi of half walking and half sitting (fascicle two, first section), Chih-i states:

Among the three modes of activity in practice, there is verbal action, which concerns speech and silence. Become able beforehand to utter the dharani spell by memory. In the practice at the beginning of the day, perform the chant three times in unison, beseeching the presence of the Three Treasures in the form of the ten Buddhas, the father and mother of the *Vaipulya Sutra*, and the ten princes of dharma. . . . After this prayer of beckoning, burn incense and focus your mindfulness on making offerings with the three modes of action, (sincerely worshiping with the body, sincerely praising the virtues with one’s speech, and visualizing the features with the mind). When the offerings have been finished, pay deep homage to the Three Treasures whose presence you have invoked. After paying homage, sincerely let rain tears of lamentation and repent of the evil acts you have committed. When you have repented, rise and perform one hundred twenty circumambulations. With each circumambulation there should be one complete

recitation of the dharani. The pace should be neither slow nor hurried, the pitch neither high nor low. When the circumambulatory chanting is finished, pay homage to the ten Buddhas, the *Vaipulya Sutra*, and the ten dharma princes.³²

This form of practice consists of control of body and mind based on verbal utterance in which one beseeches the buddhas and one's parents for guidance, worships, and makes offerings. In performing this practice, one gives oneself finally to repentance in which one "weeps with sorrow and rains tears." Further, in the latter part of the seventh fascicle of the same work, Chih-i touches on five kinds of repentance, concerning the first of which he writes:

Just as the bodhisattvas of the past, present, and future perform repentance when they seek the Buddha path, so do I. "I sorrow to be sinking in darkness and lacking the eye of wisdom." When such words are uttered, voice and tears fall together, and with complete sincerity and truthfulness, one throws one's whole body to the ground in prostration, like a tree crumbling and falling.... This is what is called "repentance."³³

Here, Chih-i emphasizes that the person who commits evils lacks the "eye of wisdom." In his discussion of the samadhi of half walking and half sitting also, he touches on the repentance of the six senses, beginning with the eye.³⁴ Thus, the ritual practice of repentance in which one "weeps with sorrow and rains tears" recorded in *Great Stillness and Insight* follows the same line of thought as *Rites of Repentance of the Lotus Samadhi*. In another passage, on the samadhi of constant sitting, he states that when one feels depressed or when the heart is overcome by joy and one raises one's voice and boldly sorrows and laughs, one feels exhilarated and at ease in body and mind.³⁵ The flexible union of body and mind lies in close and inseparable relation with the oral liberation of emotions. Chih-i probably attained realization of this through his own experience of samadhi.

As mentioned earlier, Shan-tao was probably familiar with and influenced by the writings of Chih-i, and the basic tone underlying his conception of the three grades of repentance bears much in common with the timbre of Chih-i's discussions in *Rites of Repentance of the Lotus Samadhi*. Here, taking up one further example, let us consider another aspect of Shan-tao's view of repentance.

The three grades of repentance appear in *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land*, but Shan-tao's major work is his *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, which explicates one of the three major sutras of the Pure Land tradition. The *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra* sets forth Shan-tao's systematization of Pure Land Buddhist teachings, and in it also the theme of repentance and weeping with sorrow appears. The setting of the *Contemplation Sutra* is based on the narrative of conversion and salvation referred to as the "tragedy of Rajagrha (Rājagṛha)," which relates how the prince Ajatasatru (Ajātaśatru) murders his father King Bimbisara (Bimbisāra) and confines the queen Vaidehi (Vaidehī). Vaidehi, from her chamber of confinement, turns toward Vulture Peak where Śākyamuni Buddha is residing, pays homage, and "weeps with sorrow and rains tears." At this time, she casts herself on the earth in worship, and weeping, faces the place where the Buddha abides, inquires what evil it is that she has committed to receive such pain and suffering, and repents, seeking the Buddha's compassion.³⁶ The *Contemplation Sutra* is a problematic scripture, and scholars are divided on its place of origin, whether the Indian cultural sphere or China. What is noteworthy from the perspective of our concerns here is the description of Vaidehi "weeping with sorrow and raining tears," an expression used, as we have seen, in Chih-i's *Great Stillness and Insight*. It is not possible to explore here the possible lines of influence, but we may take the expression as indicating that, with regard to the theme of repentance, both the *Contemplation Sutra* and *Great Stillness and Insight* stand in the same awareness.

How does Shan-tao interpret the words, "weeping with sorrow and raining tears," in the *Contemplation Sutra*? Related passages include the following:

Weeping with sorrow and raining tears: The queen, experiencing the weight of her own evil, beseeches the Buddha for compassion, and out of deep feelings of reverence, her eyes fill with tears of sorrow....

Casting herself on the ground in homage: Queen Vaidehi, with resentment in her heart, could scarcely endure the anguish of her anger. Because of this, she leaps up from her seat and from a standing position throws herself to the ground....

Weeping violently and turning to the Buddha: The queen swoons and tumbles before the Buddha, sobbing.

She addresses the Buddha: Somewhat after she has fallen amid her wailing, and her weeping has subsided a little, the queen is able to compose herself properly, and bowing in homage, she addresses the Buddha.³⁷

In addition to explaining the literal meaning of the text, Shan-tao as commentator reveals his own strong response to this passage. In waves of emotions of repentance, he undoubtedly often experienced himself the convulsions of despair. The meaning of “weeping with sorrow and raining tears” in the *Contemplation Sutra* for Shan-tao, as with Chih-i’s use of this expression, goes beyond a concern with a phenomenon arising merely as part of a religious ritual.

6. Shinran and Tears of Sorrow

As we have seen, in his *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, Shan-tao discusses the shedding of tears in relation to Queen Vaidehi, but he makes no mention of the shedding of blood seen in his exposition of the three grades of repentance in *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land*. Shan-tao’s source for the notion of the three grades of repentance remains a mystery, but in the turbulent expression, “convulsed with violent weeping,” of the confession in *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, we find the dominant strains also manifested in the shedding of tears and of blood in

the three grades of repentance. It is a confessional expression appropriate to a person like Shan-tao, known for his attainment of samadhi, a mystical apprehension, and his confession of faith is an eruption like a flash of light.

Thus far we have considered the three grades of repentance in Shan-tao's *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land* and aspects of its context in Chinese Buddhist tradition. Let us turn now to see how Shan-tao's concept influenced the masters of the Pure Land tradition in Japan. How did Genshin, Hōnen, and Shinran understand the three grades of repentance? Surprisingly, neither Genshin nor Hōnen show any interest in the topic,³⁸ and it is Shinran alone who takes note of these words on secreting blood and shedding tears in the expanded repentance expounded by Shan-tao. Shinran quotes the entire passage in his major work, *The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way*.³⁹ This response of the three masters is astonishing. The brutal self-investigatory method of reflection delineated in the three grades of repentance appears suited rather to Genshin, who wrote the chapter on "Abhorring and Departing from the Defiled World" at the beginning of his *Essentials for Birth*. Or, even more, to Hōnen, who praises Shan-tao as a "person who has attained samadhi" at the close of his *Collection on the Nenbutsu Selected in the Primal Vow*. And is it not Shinran, who explored the ease of saying the nenbutsu and the paradoxical teaching of the attainment of Buddhahood by the evil person, who seems most distant from Shan-tao's methods of repentance as self-power practice?

Shinran's *True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way* comprises six chapters: "Teaching," "Practice," "Entrusting" (*shinjin* 信心), "Realization," "True Buddha and Land," and "Transformed Buddha-bodies and Lands." The first four chapters treat theological issues related to the present life of the nenbutsu practitioner, and the final two chapters take up issues of the rebirth in the realm of the other shore, that is, birth in the Pure Land. The most important chapter for Shinran was that on "entrusting" or *shinjin*, but the discussion of birth in the Pure Land, which is correlated to the discussion of *shinjin* and salvation, is found in the final chapter on transformed Buddha-bodies

and lands. The two chapters, in both contents and structure, form two sides of a whole and are mutually reflective.

The central theme of “Chapter on Entrusting” is the problem of the salvation of the evil person. To illuminate this topic, Shinran quotes extended passages from the *Nirvana Sutra* that treat the episode of Ajatasatru’s great offense at Rajagrha. The historical incident of Ajatasatru’s patricide and confinement of his mother forms the fundamental theme of the *Contemplation Sutra*, and in his *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, Shan-tao gives a deeply felt commentary on it. Both the *Contemplation Sutra* and the *Nirvana Sutra* dramatically narrate the events, and the latter records how Ajatasatru, who has committed the gravest of evils, is later led to redemption by Śākyamuni. Shinran discerned in the life of Ajatasatru an actual and typical example of “the attainment of Buddhahood by the person who is evil” (*Tannishō*, 3). Further, “Chapter on Transformed Buddha-bodies and Lands” continues Shinran’s intention seen above and the structure of “Chapter on Entrusting.” The egregiously evil Ajatasatru abandons his attachments to self-power and gains birth in the Pure Land through the nenbutsu of Other Power given by Amida Buddha. Shinran’s self-reflection is expressed in the passages that highlight “Chapter on Transformed Buddha-bodies and Land,” the personal confession of “transformation and entrance through the three vows” and the declaration of “consciousness of the last dharma-age” (*mappō* 末法). The former expresses the logic of conversion from self-power to Other Power, and the latter expresses an consciousness of eschatological crisis as personal self-awareness.

This conversion and self-awareness do not simply arise of themselves in a sudden visitation. Ajatasatru’s experience of conversion is not a spontaneous event. Shinran states that, in order for this interior transformation to occur, it is necessary for the nenbutsu practitioner to undergo repentance with a true, sincere mind and to receive the guidance of a genuine teacher. In the latter part of “Chapter on Entrusting,” Shinran quotes at length passages from the *Nirvana Sutra* that relate the drama of the anguish of repentance by King Ajatasatru

and the guidance given him by Śākyamuni Buddha. The process of this conversion and self-awareness is taken up again in "Chapter on Transformed Buddha-bodies and Lands." In particular, the passage setting forth the "conversion through the three vows" is a crystallization of this process.

We have seen above the form in which the theme of repentance appears in *Teaching, Practice, and Realization*. In a section of the first half of "Chapter on Transformed Buddha-bodies and Lands," Shinran again calls attention to the issue of Ajatasatru's evil acts and once more casts light on the king's conversion experience narrated in "Chapter on Entrusting." Following this section, Shinran quotes from Shan-tao's *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*. The meaning of worshiping and praising the Buddha is discussed on the basis of the three minds expounded in the sutra, "true mind," "deep mind," and "the mind of aspiration for birth in the Pure Land." Shan-tao's discussion of the three minds was a rudder that imparted decisive meaning to Shinran's own experience of conversion, and for a passage to follow that on the three minds, Shinran selected the exposition of the three grades of repentance from *Hymns of Birth in the Pure Land*. The entire passage is reproduced, including the portion on repentance manifested by the shedding of blood and the shedding of tears, and the portion on repentance undertaken with thorough sincerity.

In *Gutoku's Hymns of Lament and Reflection*, composed during Shinran's last years, he speaks of himself as a person "without shame and self-reproach."⁴⁰ He is one incapable even of repentance and knows no shame. This thinking may reflect his self-awareness in his final years. Did not Shinran's conception of Other Power, however, from the beginning endorse the act of repentance? Here again one feels surprise that Shinran showed such great interest in Shan-tao's exposition of the three grades of repentance. It is puzzling to imagine Shinran carefully copying out the passage on the shedding of blood and shedding of tears.

I do not believe that the appearance of Shan-tao's passage on repentance in "Chapter on Transformed Buddha-bodies and Lands" is accidental or insignificant. Shinran, in his years of isolated exile in

Echigo, and during his difficult efforts in propagation in the eastern provinces, surely experienced times of private and turbulent tears. At the opening of his *Pure Land Hymns on the Right, Semblance, and Last Dharma-Ages*, he writes:

It is now more than two thousand years
 Since the passing of Śākyamuni Tathagata.
 The right and semblance ages have already closed;
 So lament, disciples of later times!⁴¹

The lamentation—literally, “weep in sorrow”—resonates with Vaidehi’s tears, and also with Shan-tao’s experience described in his commentary.

7. Physical Catharsis and Spiritual Rebirth

Shinran’s contemporary Dōgen 道元, in his last years, thinking of his teacher Nyojō 如淨, often shed “tears of sadness.” Reviving in his memory his younger years when he journeyed to Sung 宋 China and passed days of hardship in Zen practice, he dyed his robes crimson with his tears.⁴² Similarly, Nichiren 日蓮 also, dwelling on Mt. Minobu 身延 in disappointment in his final years, wrote to disciples speaking of the tears at his cheeks.⁴³ It is not unnatural to imagine that Dōgen and Nichiren, like Shinran, should have had deep experience of tears. That Nichiren, whose propagation was so vigorous as to appear even self-righteous, and Dōgen, whose ascetic image seems unapproachable, should have experienced tears in their last years may be surprising, but it is not incomprehensible. An inexhaustible reservoir of pure emotion lay within their breasts.

Saint Francis of Assisi entered Mt. La Verna to pray in the summer of 1224. In September, he received the stigmata. When he was performing missionary work in the eastern provinces he had already had an eye disorder, and in his thoroughgoing life of prayer, in which he reduced sleep to a minimum, he came near to losing sight in both his

eyes. After leaving the Aruveruna mountains, he went completely blind, but in the darkness of blindness, he composed his "Hymn to the Sun."⁴⁴ It is impossible here to compare the experiences of Saint Francis and Ignatius Loyola, but perhaps it is not impossible to conjecture that Saint Francis' eye disorder was accelerated by the shedding of tears in prayer. As seen in the case of Loyola, lamentation, tears, and loss of sight are closely associated in the life of prayer based on repentance and austerities.

In this chapter, I have focused on the issue of tears in relation to religious experience. It is also possible to consider this topic more broadly as involving the body as a whole or body symbolism. In addition to tears, other bodily secretions such as excreta, nails, and hair might be the object of common research. These secretions may be for the body no more than waste material to be eliminated, but within specific cultural contexts, they may take on symbolic power. In other words, discharges and severed matter may, through a symbolic power, bring about a kind of condition of "liberation" or "ecstasy" after being evacuated or severed. Here, semen and menstrual blood might also be considered. As long as the body maintains a normal rate of metabolism, to some extent it continues with close interrelationship with a psychological catharsis functioning. In this sense, we cannot limit the physical body to what is encapsulated within the skin.

Although the relationship between lamentation and the phenomenon of shedding tears is certainly not fixed when viewed from a broad cross-cultural perspective, in this chapter, I have sought to trace the causal relationship lying between them and related issues as they appear in several religious thinkers.

